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Newspaper	The Star
Date	25/2/2014

Be wary of what you say, diplomats warned

The Star - 25/2/2014

PM: Even things spoken in private have a way of getting on the Net

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KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysian diplomats must be wary of what they say – even behind closed doors – as they embrace technological and social changes, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

“It is more than just coping with social media as it must be practised and a prerequisite. However, beware because anything you say, even behind closed doors, can be found on the Internet in real time,” he said at the opening of the Eighth Conference of Heads of Mission yesterday.

Addressing 105 ambassadors, high commissioners and consul-generals, Najib said this was crucial in light of the changes to society brought about by technology.

“Running throughout these geo-political developments and changes

are deeper currents of technological and social change, such as increasing access to information, new forms of citizen activism, higher expectations and greater accountability in an age of information,” he said.

Diplomats, said Najib, should respond and adapt to the changes aimed at securing a safer and more sustainable future for the nation.

“We must react to the transformations around us with a transformation of our own and with a foreign policy which will see Malaysia through to 2020, a developed nation and beyond,” he said.

Earlier, Najib said traditional hierarchies and relationships between major superpowers had undergone changes in the last century, of which Malaysia should emerge as the region’s “Middle Power”.

“We must embrace our position as one of the region’s Middle Power of

states that rarely act alone but which have a significant systematic impact in a small group or international institutions,” he said.

In this respect, there would be greater expectations from the Malaysian public and international community for the country to play a more leading role in Asia and globally, pointed out Najib.

He also said that the nation would be impacted by the ongoing instability in West Asia, particularly religious and ethnic conflicts between differing groups.

“Underpinning the tension and conflicts (in West Asia) is the Sunni and Syiah conflict.

“This state of uncertainty and instability is a challenge for us as our close cultural, religious and economic ties to the region mean that developments there would resonate with the Malaysian public,” he said.

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Bolstering ties: Najib mingling with the participants of the Eighth Conference of Heads of Mission in Kuala Lumpur. – Bernama